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THE INTERNATIONAL SEAMEN'S CONFERENCE

SINCE EARLY JUNE, under the auspices of the International Conference of Labor of the League of Nations, delegates representing the leading maritime nations of the world have been in session in Genoa, Italy. The United States has had informal rather than formal governmental representation; but Andrew Furuseth, president of the International Seamen's Union, who is the outstanding personality in the American shipping world as a labor leader, has been present in the city and has had much to do with shaping conclusions, through his personal contact with the delegates and by his public utterances.

Historically considered, the conference is a pendant of the conference held in Washington last year, at which it was arranged that this specialized issue should be discussed separately and later. Then as now the United States as a government had no formal connection with the gathering, owing to the anomalous position of the country toward the League.

From the international standpoint the Genoa Conference derives its importance from the large number of nations represented, the vital part that maritime affairs play in world history, and the composition of the conference. Ship-owners, seamen, and representatives of States—or the general public—have sat down to frame new standards of hours of labor, payment of workers, and terms of entering upon and leaving crews. As in Washington, so in Genoa, there has been much more unity of opinion and action than had been predicted. It is true that on the main issue, that of an eight-hour day and a forty-eight-hour week, the conservatives won, though a majority of the nations voting favored the standard. But the conference did recommend that in every nation seamen be placed on the same legal plane as ship-owners; and it endorsed the demand that all treaties compelling seamen to work against their will and making possible their imprisonment for failure to live up to contracts be abolished. To protect juvenile life the conference urged that no one be permitted to join a crew who is not fourteen years old. Sympathy with the demand that such rules as govern sea-going craft should also govern vessels plying on inland waters was formally voted. The conference also practically unanimously voted for abolition of the blockade against Russia.

To one who knows something of how much the much-abused seamen's act passed by Congress a few years ago has done not only to put an end to scandalous abuses on American ships but to force voluntary raising of wage standards on foreign-owned vessels coming into American ports, the significance of the Genoa Conference is more apparent than to a person not thus informed.

Seamen, like all other workers, are ambitious for the best possible conditions of labor. They will not remain in the British, Scandinavian, or Dutch service if they can get better treatment in America; and their assertion of this policy already has forced from non-American ship-owners substantial concessions.

Naturally resistance to a higher wage scale, shorter hours of labor, and greater freedom for seamen has come from Great Britain, and at this conference she frequently has found herself deserted by her Dominions. Canadians and Australians have a living standard that is more like the American than the British, and they know full well that they cannot build up their carrying trade on a wage basis such as Great Britain still stands for.

THE INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ONE of the most important agencies for collecting data on disputed issues of commerce, transportation, finance, and government recently brought into being in this country is the Chamber of Commerce of the United States. Through it a solidarity of knowledge and a directness of aim have been given to one of the most important groups of electors. Armed with the results of its questionnaires answered by more than three thousand local organizations, it can and it does appear before Congress or the Executive and speak with much weight.

Realizing the value to the trading interests of the world of a similar international organization, some of the projectors of the American body a few years ago set about creating an International Chamber of Commerce. The proposition met with the hearty assent of forward-looking and internationally minded men in Europe and Latin America. Then the war came and estopped all further negotiations and constructive action. As soon as the war ceased a large group of potential European members of such an international chamber visited the United States, partly to re-establish business connections and partly to study the workings of the Chamber of Commerce. These visitors at the Atlantic City Conference endorsed the plan to go ahead with organization of the chamber; and on June 26 it opened its first session in Paris, with delegates from five nations present to organize, but not to control, for, at one of the first sessions, admittance was given to representatives of all nations signatory to the Versailles Treaty.

On page 247 of this issue we summarize briefly the results of this meeting. Suffice it to add here that if this organization does nothing more than make it possible for men of many nations to discuss openly and endorse

or reject as frankly plans for solving large world problems that now center around production, distribution, and consumption of wealth, it will have justified its birth. Co-operation or matching of minds cannot but lead to something like consent on principles of conduct. Nominally gathered to discuss technical problems, ethical issues will arise, debates will follow, and commercialism, pure and simple, will have to be reckoned with idealism. For instance, at this session "unfair competition" was discussed. Delegates who came expecting to grind their own or their nation's axes were at once told that the chamber hoped to move on a higher plane than that. When the topic of divulging commercial secrets was open for debate, a raw and sore nerve that much needs attention got it. So also when protection of trade-marks was considered. For it is these differing codes of business morality held by individuals and by nations that cause much friction. The disputes that arise because of them have a cumulative effect. In due time they share in bringing on war.

IS THERE LIGHT IN RUSSIA?

THE darkness that has been Russia's has been a great darkness. But now at a time when the Bolshevik troops are undoubtedly warring successfully along the Polish front; when George Krasin, ablest man of business in the Bolshevik government, is functioning with marked success as de facto Soviet ambassador to the Court of St. James, having brought Great Britain, indeed, to his terms, President Wilson, upon his own initiative, it is said, has decided to open trade relations between the United States and Soviet Russia. Is this the beginning of the dawn in Russia?

In some respects Mr. Wilson's action is quite remarkable. We understand that one of his motives is to "give rope" to the Bolshevik, that they may hang themselves. Another reason is that it may be a means of overthrowing Lenin, because it will deprive him of the excuse that the outside world is preventing him from building up Russia. Whether or not these were real reasons in the mind of Mr. Wilson we cannot say. If they were, they constitute a part of the strangeness of the proceeding. It is a fact that Ludwig C. A. K. Martens, head of the Russian Soviet Bureau in the United States, is skeptical of the effectiveness of Mr. Wilson's declaration, for the reason that no provision has been made for the establishment of credits by which the American business man may be paid for his goods; furthermore, it does not provide for the necessary commercial communications by mail or cable. It is certainly no illustration of an open diplomacy openly arrived at. The procedure was even announced during the absence of our Secretary of

State, and, indeed, it is quite at variance with every utterance relative to Russia which Mr. Colby has made since he accepted his portfolio. It would seem that the action may prove embarrassing to large numbers of influential persons in the Democratic party, including, perhaps, Mr. Cox, for the opposition in America to the Bolsheviks is quite general. Mr. Wilson's action is peculiar, we may also say, to take such a step, announcing at the same time the impotence of the Bolsheviks, the paucity of raw materials in Russia, and the absence of credit. It is especially interesting to note Mr. Wilson's announcement to the American business men that if they do business with Red Russia they will do so at their own risk.

Of course, the extreme opponents of the Bolsheviks are quick to point out that if the United States succeeds in getting supplies to Russia, the shippers may comfort themselves with the realization that they are doing their best to destroy all civilized governments, including the Government of the United States, for it is against such governments that the Bolsheviks are set. It would be interesting to hear the remarks of the peoples with whom we have been associated in the war, particularly in enlightened and property owning France.

Undoubtedly this is the darkest period of Russia's history. Undoubtedly this Russia of a thousand years is the most serious single problem facing the world today. Colossal, feared, and envied, the world feels as never before the importance of Russia. As is frequently said, "Russia's tragedy is a world tragedy." If as at the dawn of her history, she is to create a great State out of her present despair; if she is to demonstrate that her powers of production are unimpaired; if she is to take up again her unexcelled spiritual achievements in literature, in the arts, and in the sciences, and to carry these to still greater heights, Russia must overcome her diseased body and travailing soul. Other nations can help in this undertaking, but the one nation upon whom the job most depends is of course Russia.

There is no doubt of Russia's disease. The campaign of Lenin and Trotsky has been one of the most amply financed and widely extended of any ever thrust upon the ordered governments. The funds have come from the loot of banks and churches, from the private fortunes of captured and even murdered individuals. Agents empowered by these funds have found their way to all continents, and to the peoples of all stages of civilization, especially to those with agrarian discontent on the one hand and the latent germs of urban industrial revolt on the other. Their manifesto, distributed widely in north and south China, whence the Soviet military forces have obtained some of their fiercest and most cruel hired mercenaries, shows clearly their one desire,